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Letter dated 5 August 2015 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

Further to my most recent report to the Security Council on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2015/475), I have the honour to hereby request the Council to consider the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which is due to expire on 31 August 2015. In a letter dated 14 July 2015 addressed to me, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Emigrants of Lebanon requested the Council to extend the mandate of UNIFIL for a further year, without amendment.

UNIFIL continues to play a crucial role in ensuring peace and stability in southern Lebanon, as well as full respect for the Blue Line by both Lebanon and Israel. Following the serious breach of the cessation of hostilities on 28 January 2015, calm and stability have been maintained in the UNIFIL area of operations and along the Blue Line. Nevertheless, the bellicose rhetoric in Israel and Lebanon has contributed to maintaining a state of tension and heightening the risk of miscalculation.

In that context, and in accordance with its mandate, UNIFIL continues to monitor the cessation of hostilities and to assist the Lebanese armed forces in taking steps towards the establishment, between the Blue Line and the Litani River, of an area free of any unauthorized armed personnel, assets and weapons. UNIFIL remains engaged with the parties on the outstanding issue of northern Ghajar and continues to monitor and report on ground and air violations of resolution 1701 (2006). UNIFIL also takes all action necessary, within its capabilities, to ensure that its area of operations is not used for hostile activities of any kind.

The UNIFIL Maritime Task Force continues to carry out its dual mandate of conducting maritime interdiction operations in the area of maritime operations and training Lebanese navy personnel.

Efforts are continuing to ensure a comprehensive approach to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) that integrates the endeavours of UNIFIL, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon and the United Nations country team to further involve the Government of Lebanon in the implementation of the resolution and to increase the capacity of the Lebanese armed forces. The latter is intended to facilitate the gradual assumption by the armed forces of effective and sustainable security control of the UNIFIL area of operations and Lebanese territorial waters, as a key element in supporting moves towards a permanent ceasefire.

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Cooperation between UNIFIL and the Lebanese armed forces on land and at sea continues to be essential for the implementation of the mandate of UNIFIL. Notwithstanding the temporary redeployments of some units of the armed forces from the South Litani Sector to elsewhere in the country, UNIFIL and the armed forces continue to conduct many coordinated operational activities.

I underline the call for increased international support for the Lebanese armed forces, in response to their capabilities development plan, as well as in the framework of the International Support Group for Lebanon, including in the context of the strategic dialogue between the forces and UNIFIL.

The well-established liaison and coordination arrangements of UNIFIL with the parties, including the tripartite mechanism, have facilitated constructive and pragmatic measures. UNIFIL continues to build on its efforts to promote practical arrangements on the ground and understanding between the Lebanese armed forces and the Israel Defense Forces in order to further stabilize the situation along the Blue Line and build trust.

The process of visibly marking the Blue Line is continuing with the marking of non-contentious points. UNIFIL has continued to ensure that the tripartite mechanism is as flexible as possible and enables the parties to discuss a wider range of issues.

The overall attitude of the local population towards UNIFIL remains positive. The freedom of movement of UNIFIL and the security and safety of its personnel are integral to the effective execution of its tasks. The primary responsibility for ensuring the freedom of movement of UNIFIL personnel in the area of operations lies with the Lebanese authorities.

The total number of military personnel, as at 15 July 2015, was 10,501 and the civilian component numbered 260 international and 585 national staff.

I am grateful to the 39 troop-contributing countries for their continuing commitment. That commitment, coupled with the development of a strategic partnership with the Lebanese armed forces, has enabled the successful implementation of several key aspects of resolution 1701 (2006). As the UNIFIL mandate approaches its expiration date, however, it is clear that more work remains to be done.

I should like to express my appreciation to the Head of Mission and Force Commander of UNIFIL, Major General Luciano Portolano, and to all the military and civilian personnel of UNIFIL for the work that they are carrying out in southern Lebanon in the service of peace.

Regarding the financial aspects of UNIFIL, the General Assembly, by its resolution 69/302, appropriated to the Special Account for UNIFIL the amount of $506.3 million gross for the maintenance of the mission for the period from 1 July 2015 to 30 June 2016. Should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of the mission beyond 31 August 2015, the cost of maintaining UNIFIL will be limited to the amounts approved by the Assembly.

As at 24 July 2015, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNIFIL amounted to $97.1 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at the same date amounted to $3,231.4 million. As at 24 July 2015, the total amount owed to Member States that contribute troops to

UNIFIL was $26.9 million. Troop and contingent-owned equipment costs have been reimbursed for the periods up to 30 April 2015 and 31 March 2015, respectively, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

With the above information in mind, I recommend that the Council extend the mandate of UNIFIL for a further 12 months, until 31 August 2016.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon